
Project Proposal: Digit Recognizer

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1 Introduction

Recognizing hand-written characters has long been a hot topic in artificial intelligence community. Handwriting recognition is the ability of a computer to receive and interpret intelligible handwritten input from sources such as paper documents, photographs, touch-screens and other devices. In the past decades, many probabilistic or non-probabilistic algorithms have been exploited to effectively solve this problem, including K-nearest neighbour, random forest, and well-known neural network.

In this project proposal, we will explain the reason of diving into this problem and demonstrate reader the some details of our experimental project. And most importantly, the planned timeline of project progress will be present to reader in later section.

2 Motivation

As to the historical application of handwriting recognition, basically they are categorized into two parts, one for hardware and the other for software. For hardware part, commercial products incorporating handwriting recognition as a replacement for keyboard input were introduced in the early 1980s. The hardware application continued to develop in the following decades. Until the recent years, Tablet PCs can be regarded as a special notebook computer that is outfitted with a digitizer tablet and a stylus, and allows a user to handwrite text on the unit's screen. For software part,

Plenty of mature solutions has already been developed to existence in solving the handwriting problem. Since 2009, the recurrent neural networks and deep feedforward neural networks developed in the research group of Jrgen Schmidhuber at the Swiss AI Lab IDSIA have outshined many other models in competitions. The fact that existing algorithms are powerful in recognizing digits does not remove possibility of further improvement. The chance of improvement lies in reduction of computational complexity for recognizing digits in higher degree.

3 Project Details

What deserves being mentioned is that the holder of this Kaggle Competition provides us two basic models to better illuminate the problem of digit recognition and the form of given dataset, the MNIST.

3.1 Provided Baseline Models

As mentioned above, implementations of two baseline models are provided by the holder of that kaggle competition. These baselines are respectively K-Nearest Neighbour Model and Random Forest Model. However, the baseline models are extremely computationally expensive since they naively employ the raw data without turning to feature extraction methods.

*Supervised by Prof. Pradeep Ravikumar

3.2 Models To Explore

In this project, we should first implement effective feature extraction from the raw image intensity data in MNIST.

Besides, we will further investigate the performance of a series of machine learning algorithms on digit recognition. Our attempt will involve in neural network, deep learning. For specific implementation, we will refer to existing libraries unless there does not exist one.

3.3 Timeline

The project timeline is shown as follows:

- **March. 23 - April. 02.** Propose project and try provided baseline models. Implement feature extraction.
- **April. 02 - April. 12.** Explore performance of new models in given dataset. Tasks may involves in reading relevant paper and referring to relevant libraries. Current plan at this stage is to achieve simple model like neural network and some generative models .
- **April. 13 - April. 18.** Draft initial version of project report and record performance results of all attempted models.
- **April. 19 - April. 25.** Further explore some more advanced models.
- **April. 25 - May. 2.** Put down new progress at second-time exploration and proofread the project report.

4 Conclusion

The main objective of this project is to apply various existing machine learning algorithms on the long-lasting digit recognition problem and evaluate the performance of each algorithm on solving this particular problem. In addition, we leave another problem, the feature extraction, as our secondary focus.

Our wish is to achieve a model with digit recognition accuracy as close to 100% as possible. Actually, about 10 teams have already fulfill perfect recognizer, identifying given digit image with no error! But for us, a accuracy over 90% is acceptable for this experimental project.

5 References

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